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PRELIMINARY RESEARCH ON AMERICAN SOLDIERS OF SPANISH-ETHNIC ORIGIN AND HERITAGE

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PRELIMINARY RESEARCH ON AMERICAN SOLDIERS OF SPANISH-ETHNIC ORIGIN AND HERITAGE

INTRODUCTION

This report reviews recent ARI research conducted on soldiers of Spanish-speaking ethnic origin and heritage, and summarizes data obtained on these soldiers (who will be hereafter referred to as "Spanish" soldiers).[1] It describes how the data were obtained, the principal findings, how the points relate to one another, and how they fit into a broader picture of research on soldiers in the US Army.

The research reviewed here was exploratory and was conducted to provide preliminary information on the following broad research questions: who are the "Spanish" soldiers in the US Army, and how and where do they fit into the Army? These questions can be broken down more specifically:

a. Are there general terms, such as "Spanish," which these soldiers accept and use themselves? If so, what are these terms and who uses them: Does everyone? Just "Spanish" soldiers? Only some "Spanish" soldiers? Or, no "Spanish" soldiers?

b. What are the important background differences (e.g., language) between "Spanish" and other soldiers? What background characteristics do "Spanish" soldiers share as a group, and what background characteristics occur just within certain subgroups? For example, most Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans differ in their home state or region. Are there other important differences such as rural vs. urban upbringing, bilingualism vs. monolingualism or being an immigrant vs. being native born?

c. Are there important differences between "Spanish" and other soldiers in military terms -- MOS, job performance, discipline, for example?

d. Are there any particular aspects of Army life that make it easier or more difficult for "Spanish" soldiers to find a satisfying, productive life in the service compared to other soldiers, minority or otherwise? Are there certain kinds of "Spanish" soldiers who have more problems than others?

e. What is the history of "Spanish" soldiers' participation in the US Army and reserve components? What patterns, if any, have occurred in their use? For example, has anything happened that would compare to the formation of Black units and the Nisei unit in World War II?

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1. The problem of labeling and identification is discussed on page 8 ff.

f. What special rules, regulations, programs and traditions have been specifically related to "Spanish" soldiers - such as the English language training programs at Ft. Jackson and in Puerto Rico? How do these actions (if they have been taken) compare to the treatment of other linguistic minorities in the US Army or in other armies?

METHOD

The research reviewed here comprises a series of individual and small-group interviews conducted at seven CONUS installations between January and July 1975. Some 320 soldiers were interviewed and were given the choice of taking the interview in Spanish, English or both languages. The interviewees included nearly 50 company commanders or first sergeants, representing both training and garrison companies, both line and support. There are also interview data from some 50 staff officials from staff elements at the installations or at the Department of the Army: Race Relations and Equal Opportunity, Military Personnel Center or Adjutant General, Inspector General, Judge Advocate General, Army Community Services, Chief of Chaplains, Chief of Military History, Army Air Force Exchange System, Education Center System, Commissary System, Chief of Information and Provost Marshal.[2]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained fall into several types, all of which are used below. Staff and commander or first sergeant interviews were noted and the notes culled for major themes. Group interviews of enlisted soldiers were tape recorded and the tapes reviewed for major themes. Individual interviews were recorded on interview forms and this data machine analyzed.[3] The results are discussed below under the headings of language, recreation and off-duty time, work and duty time, race relations and equal opportunity, identification and Army management issues.

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2. See Appendix A for a more detailed description of data collection.

3. During his introduction to the interview, the researcher told the participants that they would be recorded but that they could ask him to turn the recorder off or do so themselves whenever they wanted to make comments "off the record." The recorder was placed in plain sight of the participants; some did have the recorder turned off in order to make specific comments.

LANGUAGE

Spanish is an important symbol for "Spanish" and non-Spanish soldiers alike. It is the first language for many of the "Spanish" soldiers interviewed;[4] they use it for conversation as naturally as an English-speaking American uses English overseas. But Spanish is not just a tool, it is a confirmation of being "Spanish," a sign of comradeship or respect, and a reminder of home: e.g., some "Spanish" soldiers argued that "Spanish" soldiers need to speak their language to affirm their identity. These soldiers also expressed the desire to have places where they could gather, have "Spanish" activities and speak their own language.

Spanish appears to have a somewhat different effect among non-Spanish soldiers. Some "Spanish" enlisted personnel reported they knew "Spanish" soldiers who were harassed or threatened with Article 15 or court martial punishment for speaking Spanish.[5] Others complained of having to get translations of marriage documents made and certified through JAG before dependent identification cards were issued.[6] If true, this would indicate that by using his language to make himself more comfortable in Army life, or to help others, the "Spanish" soldier finds other people taking his language and turning it against him.

If the role of Spanish is primarily symbolic, particularly to the non-Spanish speaking, the role of English is relatively more that of a communications tool. None of the "Spanish" interviewees argued that English was not a necessary and indeed inevitable means to career advancement and many benefits; however, for many it appears more a hindrance than a tool for success. Some felt they were harassed or discriminated against because their English sounded Spanish. In contrast, supervisors reported difficulty in distinguishing soldiers with genuine English problems from those who were malingering; they lacked guidelines for dealing with language problems. A soldier's lack of English skills also affects his job performance, a problem for both supervisor and soldier. Individual soldiers and several supervisors also felt that the English training available was either inadequate or inaccessible.

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4. Among 54 "Spanish" respondents, only four did not report Spanish as a mother tongue. There were 38 who reported speaking Spanish at work, 28 of 29 that used Spanish at home with their spouse and 23 of 26 that spoke it with their children.

5. This feeling is corroborated by data from the earlier ARI study, which found that two-thirds of the Puerto Ricans and almost three-fifths of the Mexican American junior enlisted soldiers agreed th soldiers of other ethnic groups "frequently" or "always" became susp ous when they saw a group of "Spanish" soldiers who were speaking Spanish.

6. The soldiers, Puerto Ricans in this case, were perplexed in view of the fact that these Spanish documents are valid in court in their part of the USA; the same legal status holds true in the courts of New Mexico, for example.

Several "Spanish" soldiers and NCOs argued that the impact of English problems persisted throughout many soldiers' careers. They felt that MOS testing using written tests reflected a soldier's English language skills more than job performance.[7] They also felt that English skills influenced standard test achievement, that these tests were used for promotion and schooling selection, creating another instance in which English-language problems hurt the soldier's career. Some soldiers and supervisors reported knowing enlistees with useful pre-service skills who were underused or malassigned because language problems masked their skills. Soldiers and supervisors complained that personnel were being enlisted who lacked the language skills required for success in the Army.

English is both a tool and a barrier not only for the soldier, but also for his family. Lack of English skills appears to limit how much a soldier's dependents can participate in the Army community and be supported by it. Soldiers said their families were not able to make full use of post facilities, the major reason cited: poor English fluency. This is compounded by the lack of identified translators in such key services as the PX, commissary and medical facilities.[8] Some felt their wives were treated in unsympathetic or insulting ways; it is not clear whether this reflects others' intentions or is a misperception by the "Spanish" soldiers. Whatever the reason, interviewees reported having to leave work to act as translators for their wives in the hospital. The pull between the English of the outside community and the language of the home is another dilemma: the more "Spanish" he and his dependents are, the more difficult it is to have a satisfactory professional and family life.[9]

The conventional solution for the soldiers' problem is English language training. The general tone of comments made by "Spanish" soldiers, commanders, staff officers and education center staff was that the existing programs are not adequate.[10] There were complaints that the curricula

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7. See Roberts, Johnson and Smith-Waison (1973).

8. See Gonzalez (1973).

9. Some older "Spanish" soldiers reported taking a rather Draconian measure to overcome what they saw as the inadequacy of their own English skills or Army remedial classes: they deliberately disassociated themselves from "Spanish-speaking" soldiers, refusing to use Spanish with their other associates until they learned English well.

10. The ARI researchers had extended discussions with education center staff at several posts. The staff commented that good English language training materials were either hard or impossible to find and that the fluctuation in student load and low staffing priority made it hard to retain good faculty. These staff members also complained about the quality of the curricula and teaching materials, which are outside the scope of this study.

are inflexible, that there are difficulties in getting released from duty to attend class, and that assignment to English language training (especially to a special training company in BCT) is a bad mark on a soldier's record. Further difficulties lie in the various needs of soldiers, from the Puerto Rican college student, literate in English but with spoken English problems, through those who speak a non-standard dialect or are illiterate, to those illiterate in Spanish and English.[11] Soldiers also observed that some of the English taught is appropriate to school children and schools rather than adults in the Army. In short, there appear to be questions on the relevance of the English taught, how it is taught, and the flexibility of the programs to meet specific needs. This is supported by the conviction among supervisors voiced by several commanders, that they are being asked to give up one of their soldiers to training that is not productive.

There is another language related problem for the commanders alluded to above. There are no reference points to use in dealing with the soldier who has low English skills. There are no tests the commanders can use to assess skills, nor does there appear to be any common notion of an Army policy regarding remedial training or use of any language other than English. These are simply added to other problems which ultimately come back to the commander: perceived harassment for the use of Spanish; isolation of the "Spanish" soldier's family; adverse factors in career development and job performance; inadequacy of remedial facilities or programs -- all reducing the soldier's effectiveness.

The research raises more questions related to language than it answers. One basic question is, what is the size of the problem? How many "Spanish" soldiers or their families use Spanish? How many have problems with English and what are the problems? How important is it to them to speak Spanish, and when? Are there critical points at which measures can be taken to improve matters; if so, when and where and what measures should be taken? As will be seen, language is a pervasive issue in dealing with the "Spanish" soldier.

RECREATION AND OFF-DUTY TIME

The comments and complaints of many "Spanish" soldiers appear to center around a desire to maintain something of their own cultural life. Another issue stems from comparing Army actions oriented to Black soldiers to what they see for themselves. Their feelings are aggravated by a perception that "Spanish" soldiers are often treated as a homogenous group without regard to regional cultural differences, e.g., at a "Spanish ethnic" night, all the food served is Southwest, Mexican style.

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11. Another type of variation is regional: Puerto Ricans tend to have more language problems than Mexican Americans; that this has been informally detected by other soldiers is reflected in the reported tendency to stereotype "Spanish" with greater English problems as "Puerto Rican" and those with fewer as "Mexican American."

The desire for cultural identity may be one source of "Spanish" soldiers' professed avoidance of NCO clubs. The music selection (which is allegedly either soul or country western) is a sore point to the "Spanish" soldier. There are also few posts that have "Spanish" communities nearby as an alternative to on-post recreation. Some "Spanish" soldiers perceive that the Army supports Black holidays more than "Spanish" ones; that although there is an adequate stock of Black clothing, greeting cards, magazines and music in the PX, there are few or no "Spanish" goods.[12] Again, there was a commonly expressed need to have a place where soldiers could be "Spanish," do "Spanish" things, and speak Spanish.[13]

"Spanish" soldiers with dependents appear to live lives that are more family-oriented than the non-Spanish interviewed. For instance, the "Spanish" express a need for family recreation areas and activities -- picnicking or walking, for example. They seem inclined to get together in one another's homes more than to go out, as couples, to clubs and outside recreation. Most were much more reluctant or flatly opposed to using post nursery or day-care facilities. Many found it difficult to obtain ingredients necessary for making regional dishes in the commissary.[14] On the more positive side, religious services in Spanish are seen as positive and unifying. However, an installation's capacity to respond to the needs of the Spanish community is limited. There are few Spanish-speaking chaplains. One reason PX and commissary stocks do not match "Spanish" soldiers' desires is that stocks come from regional suppliers and reflect the civilian market. There are few Puerto Rican civilians in the Southwest; hence, Chicano needs may be supplied but not Puerto Rican ones.

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12. Gonzalez (1973, 1975).

13. Fifteen "Spanish" soldiers answered a question on why they would prefer assignment to a given post. Nine of the 15 gave nearness to home or Spanish community as their reason. Only five of 18 non-Spanish answering the question gave the same answers.

On the negative side, "Spanish" soldiers living in barracks complained they were harassed and even threatened by both Blacks and Whites for playing "Spanish" music.

For other instances of the sense of cultural isolation, see Gonzalez' (1973) report. Roberts et al. (1973) have other relevant data primarily concerning culturally relevant recreational activities off-post; over half the Puerto Ricans felt there was "frequently" or "always" a lack, half the Blacks, two-fifths of the Mexican Americans, but only one-fifth of the Whites. Similarly, almost two-thirds of the Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans said they seldom or never could find local girls of their ethnic group to date, as opposed to half the Blacks and the Whites.

14. Interviewees at two East Coast installations said that a few family-run grocery stores had sprung up off-post to cater to the "Spanish" military community.

What do "Spanish" soldiers require to meet their recreational needs, and to feel more supported by and a part of the Army community? What are their needs for maintaining a "Spanish" identity? It appears the "Spanish" soldiers' need to maintain identity -- expressed in spending much off-duty time at or near home, with other "Spanish," and avoiding mixed activities -- aggravates their sense of not being part of the Army community. Several soldiers in open-ended discussions described family unhappiness and problems as the main or only reason they were leaving the service. To put the question differently, are there critical services and actions which can be carried out to retain the good soldier in the service; if so, what are they? What would their cost be to the Army?

WORK AND DUTY TIME

Language is central to the most commonly voiced problems relating to duty hours. Soldiers' concerns have already been discussed: harassment for speaking Spanish; need for English training which is more effective for work and career progress; misassignment.

The prime concern expressed by commanders and supervisors is that Spanish soldiers have sufficient competence in English to be effective soldiers. They have reported that soldiers with language problems are often hindered by their own embarrassment or their inability in discussing problems with their supervisors. Some have also observed that "Spanish" soldiers, particularly Puerto Ricans, tended to spend off-duty time together, thereby lessening their opportunity to speak English. The supervisors' general sentiment is that it is not right for a person to be enlisted into the Army, to be trained in an MOS, or to be given a permanent duty assignment without English skills equal to the job's requirements or the means to obtain them.

All other observations made by the supervisors tended to be favorable. They found "Spanish" soldiers willing workers who react well to discipline, take pride in their personal appearance and maintain their personal equipment and living areas exceptionally well. The collective impression of JAG and MP officers is that "Spanish" soldiers are probably less involved in disciplinary actions than other soldiers, and when they are involved, the offenses seem to be less serious.

In summation, work-related problems seem to stem primarily from the language difficulties the "Spanish" soldiers have. It is then essential to determine when Spanish can be used and the best way to insure that "Spanish" soldiers have the language skills required for their duty. Excluding the language problem, "Spanish" soldiers appear to adjust well, take discipline well, keep out of trouble and make fine soldiers. The main exception among work problems is a tendency to go absent without leave to resolve family problems; supervisors report the cultural basis is different, they do not report this as a major issue, however. Most other problems concern off-duty life, as discussed above.

RACE RELATIONS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The most consistent comment from "Spanish" soldiers is that they see the RR/EO program as Black oriented.[15] The RR/EO program may very well serve as a focus for discontent over items such as PX stockage and ethnic rights as well as RR/EO actions per se, because the feeling is that RR/EO staffing is dominated by Blacks. The researchers found great variation in the "Spanish" content of RR/EO activities from post to post, including the degree of sophistication with which "Spanish" subgroups were distinguished, particularly Puerto Rican and Mexican American. For example, some post legal offices have Spanish interpreters, some Army Community Service offices; others do not. Some post's "Spanish" days would distinguish among Mexican American, Puerto Rican and perhaps Cuban; others would treat all as Mexican American.

From the management perspective, RR/EO and other staff officials reported feeling that the ethnic designator information was under-representative or unreliable. At one post, the RR/EO staff found the count of Mexican Americans based on ethnic designator data in SIDPERS to be half that obtained from unit RR/EO personnel. Therefore, the question on how to measure equality or inequality of opportunity must stand in abeyance until the basic issue of identification is resolved.

IDENTIFICATION

This is a complex and key area. The following discussion centers around these questions: what point of view is concerned; how does the actual identification take place; what is the purpose of the identification; and exactly what group is being identified?

Valid ethnic identification data is essential for the Army to provide realistic figures as criteria for Army and installation affirmative action plans. It is also a key in providing reliable data to the Department of Defense or other Federal agencies. Army programs targeted at "Spanish" soldiers or subgroups similarly depend on reliable identification data in order to establish how large the programs must be and to whom they should be directed. Further, if these groups are properly identified, it will be possible to better define other characteristics such as education, career management fields, or residence.

In July 1974 and subsequently, the Army took the approach of having the individual soldier select his own ethnic category from a list of fourteen, which then goes into his records. Statistics obtained on this basis are valid only when assuming, for example, that all persons who consider themselves Mexican Americans are recorded as such, and all those recorded as Mexican Americans consider themselves to be Mexican

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15. See Gonzalez (1975)

Americans, with few errors. Unfortunately, there is evidence that the linkage between the soldier's self-identification and the translation of it into Army records is weak.[16] The apparent "Spanish" undercount of 50% at one post has been cited; furthermore, during group interviews, less than one tenth of the soldiers said they knew what ethnic designator they had or that they had one at all; only four or five described the process of their designation in a way that resembled the DA recommended procedure. The same few soldiers report being told they were getting an ethnic designator, and furthermore having some unit personnel clerk or NCO tell them what category they were going to have. In short, there is reason to suspect that the individual soldier was often not involved in what was supposedly a self-identification process.

There are additional questions about the categories themselves. There is evidence to suggest that some "Spanish" soldiers -- Mexican Americans in particular -- will find some terms acceptable but will not wish to be identified by others; a phenomenon the researchers also observed. For example, the Current Population Survey (Census Bureau) uses the terms Mexicano, Mexican, Chicano and Mexican American to avoid any one term to which some will not respond.[17] American Blacks show similar variation in their acceptance of "Negro," "Black" and "Colored" according to background. There is a question on the necessity and sufficiency of the distinctions to meet the Army's needs. Other Army research has suggested that there are important differences between Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans.[18] By the same token, is "Cuban" a necessary distinction and are there useful distinctions among other "Spanish" soldiers which are obscured by putting them all in a single category? All these points raise questions about the meaning and accuracy of information based on the ethnic designator code.

Another important type of identification takes place on the personal level. Among "Spanish" soldiers the most common identification seems to center on region of origin rather than overall cultural commonalities. That is, these soldiers tend to identify first as Puerto Rican, Haitian or Mexican American rather than simply as "Spanish," "Hispanic," or "La Raza." Some did use these terms, but they also accepted regional identification,

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16. See Military Personnel Center, 1974. For different aspects of ethnic identification see Thompson (1974), Decision Making Information (1972) and Hernandez, et al. (1973). Babin provides a useful summary of this area.

17. Interview with Mr. Edward Fernandez, Bureau of Census, 1 April 1975; confirming Dr. Henry Ramirez, former Chairman, President's Cabinet Committee for Oportunities for Spanish Speaking People, in an interview 11 March 1975.

18. See Roberts, Johnson and Smith-Waison (1973).

yet the reverse (those who identified first regionally always accepted a general identification) was not necessarily true. Another important factor that has already been mentioned is the knowledge of Spanish. Many feel that the soldier who is truly "Spanish" should also speak the language, although mere knowledge of the language is not sufficient proof that the individual is "Spanish."

Other factors, such as race, age, and political commitment play an important role in the identification process.[19] For instance, some Puerto Rican soldiers, black by complexion or features, reported pressure from Blacks to associate with them and to disassociate from Whites (regardless of the Whites' ethnicity). However, Puerto Ricans' primary associations appeared to remain with fellow Puerto Ricans, regardless of racial identification.[20] These and other indicators tend to be less general or less definable than those of language and region of origin.

On the same personal level other soldiers' identification of "Spanish" soldiers seems to center on language. This can mean use of Spanish, accent in English, or family and given names. One New Englander with a Spanish surname observed that he often found people surprised when he reported into a new unit, not "looking" Spanish, speaking fluent English and knowing no Spanish. Regional differences are not recognized so consistently; the tendency to identify region by English language skills has already been mentioned. Indeed, other soldiers seemed more likely to refer to "Spanish" soldiers by a general term than the "Spanish" soldiers themselves.

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19. Among those individually interviewed, 39 claimed "Spanish" origins or nationality but only 23 said they were "White" (versus "Black" or "other"). Among 25 Puerto Ricans, three classified themselves as Black, 12 White, and the rest other responses. In a cross-tabulation computed on November 1974, from the MILPERCEN data base, roughly 90% of the Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans classified themselves as Caucasian versus three-fourths for Cubans and four-fifths for other-Spanish. Over 5% of the Puerto Ricans and almost 10% of the Cubans and 10% of the other Spanish were classified as Negro. Among the soldiers falling into one of the "Spanish" categories who were also classified as Negro, two-fifths were Puerto Ricans, two-fifths other-Spanish; those classified as among "other" race, almost half were Mexican American. These data argue for two points: first, that most "Spanish" soldiers classify themselves as White, racially, not "other" races; second, that race and ethnic identification are strongly related but with substantial room for error if one is equated with the other. It also follows that the nature of the error varies from group to group.

20. Among 41 "Spanish" soldiers responding to a question of off-duty associations, none reported associating with Blacks exclusively, but 21 with "Spanish" alone, five with Whites, and 10 with some Black acquaintances.

Thus, there are three important types of identification in action: how the "Spanish" soldier identifies himself, what other soldiers think he is, and what identification is carried on him in Army records. On the personal level, the single identifier of language has positive meaning to the "Spanish" soldier and neutral or negative meaning to others. It appears that success in the Army for "Spanish" soldiers may in part be related to how well they can avoid public identification with their language and heritage. The researchers were told by several "Spanish" soldiers that they do not wish to be identified as such in their records for fear it would be a basis for discrimination against them. Beyond this, the apparent conflict between cultural heritage and identity versus success in the Army may have serious implications for the morale of these soldiers.

The identification issue raises a number of questions: What is the population defined by the current ethnic designators and what exactly does the Army want to find out when identifying "Spanish" soldiers? How much are the regional or generic labels being accepted by the target populations and what labels or combinations of labels are most effective, if any? The evidence thus far argues for the need of differentiating among "Spanish" soldiers on the one hand and for refining the identification procedure on the other.

ARMY MANAGEMENT ISSUES

During the course of the field work, the researchers encountered several issues that appeared to be important personnel problems, but which were issues for Army management rather than research areas.

First, the ethnic designator system appears to have a number of problems, several involving the way in which it has been implemented in the field. In addition to questions of what categories are used, the Army needs to determine how the information on a soldier's ethnic self-identification was obtained and entered into Army records. The researchers found soldiers did not clearly understand the reason or substance of the choices. The general problem is how best to implement the ethnic designation system or to purify it, and how best to insure that the action is carried out correctly.

Second, none of the persons interviewed, from installation staff to recruits, had any clear notion of what Army regulations or stand were on using languages other than English, whether at work or just on post. There were reports of harassment and threats of official punishment for speaking Spanish. Nonetheless, none of the over 300 soldiers involved in the study could provide a statement on what the Army policy was. The absence of such an official stand leaves much room for the misguided actions reported by "Spanish" soldiers.

Third, the participating "Spanish" soldiers were often either skeptical or hostile over what they perceived as a pro-Black bias in RR/EO programs and staff. This included the feeling that there was little recognition for "Spanish" soldiers. The degree of skepticism varied from post to post as well as by ethnic subgroup.

Fourth, English language training is important, even critical. The information obtained suggests that the purpose, content and delivery of English language training can be improved, the weaknesses there being a prime stumbling block to advancement by "Spanish" soldiers.

CONCLUSIONS

The central issue tying all the above points together is the Army's need to enlist and retain effective, committed soldiers. Based on current data, the researchers have found that many "Spanish" soldiers who enter the Army intending to make it their career leave the Army at the end of their first enlistment, frustrated by language problems, lack of adequate language training, and the failure to have their families integrate into the Army community. Job malassignment and underuse also reduce the soldier's satisfaction with the Army. Therefore, many feel that their ethnic background and language difficulties prevent them from being good, successful soldiers. Consequently the Army loses good, disciplined soldiers: men who wanted to make the Army their career.

Another key question is whether "Spanish" soldiers do indeed have equal opportunities. Given the questionable validity of the ethnic designator data, there may be no accurate answer, for there is no definition of who and how many "Spanish" soldiers there are. Language problems and training are probably the most salient issues; it is an area which warrants investigation. Regional subgroups among "Spanish" soldiers (e.g., Puerto Rican and Mexican American) are not recognized even though the needs and characteristics of various groups differ markedly. In short, there is no baseline against which to measure whether or not there is equal opportunity for "Spanish" soldiers.

Last, most of these findings should apply to any Army personnel who retain substantial use of minority language or culture, e.g., Blacks, Orientals or Native Americans: perhaps one soldier of three in the Army.

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Appendix A Data Collection

ARI staff conducted three series of interviews in this effort, between January and July 1975, with DA staff, installation staff at seven CONUS posts, company commanders, NCOs and junior enlisted, some 320 persons in all. In the first series of interviews with DA and installation staff, the objective was to discover information or programs specific to "Spanish" soldiers and to determine how this information is obtained and kept. The information and programs varied greatly from post to post.

The second series included group interviews of enlisted personnel at three posts to establish and clarify what the major areas of concern were for these soldiers from their own point of view. These ninety-one soldiers were both first and second term; male and female; Mexican American, Puerto Ricans, Black, White, and other minorities, by the researcher's support request. The interviews were loosely structured around the topics of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with assignment to the particular post, recreation available, post facilities (e.g., PX, hospital, travel office), job situation, surrounding civilian community, and general satisfaction with being in service (including career intentions).

Items developed in the second series were field tested and revised at four sites in the third series of interviews. Bilingual personnel were provided by the installations to do the interviews: the researchers supervised them and conducted pilot interviews using a sample population similar to that of the second series. The 145 individual interviews provided preliminary data, and also demonstrated the need for better trained interviewers and simpler interview forms.

The nearly 100 staff officials or company commanders and first sergeants provided much useful information on the impact of "Spanish" soldiers' problems on management issues, as well as data on the soldiers' many strong points. The company staff came from BCT, AIT, combat and support units in garrison.